

2011 - 2012 Statement of Legislative Intent

Approved

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52	2	A	1

Budget Action Title: Police: Increase scope of Victim Advocates and establish their priority within the Department

Councilmembers: Bagshaw; Burgess; Clark; Conlin; Harrell; Licata; O'Brien; Rasmussen

Staff Analyst: Peter Harris

Budget Committee Vote:

Date	Result	SB	BH	SC	TR	JG	NL	RC	TB	MO
11/12/2010	Pass 9-	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

Statement of Legislative Intent:

In approving the budget for the Police Special Victims BCL, it is the Council's intent that victim advocates support victims of malicious harassment (i.e., violations of SMC 12A.06.115 or RCW 9A.46.020). It is also the Council's intent that the Police Department and Executive give higher priority to victim advocacy in future budget deliberations.

The Department has seven victim advocates who attend to the medical, emotional and financial needs of crime victims and their family members, and of crime witnesses. They keep victims apprised of the status of crime investigations, and assist officers and prosecutors in strengthening criminal cases by maintaining communication between them and the victims. They provide these services from when the incident occurs until the criminal justice process is completed.

Of the seven advocates, one assists robbery victims; two assist the families of homicide victims and victims of other serious crimes investigated by the homicide unit; two assist victims of sexual assaults; and two assist victims of domestic violence. In reports in 2008 and 2009 on the City's enforcement of bias crimes, the City Auditor recommended that the advocates also support victims of malicious harassment. The Council intends that victim advocates also support victims of malicious harassment, and requests the Department to direct the victim advocates accordingly. The Council requests a written report by June 2011 on the degree to which victim advocates are assisting victims of malicious harassment.

The proposed 2011-2012 budget abrogates two victim advocate positions. A related green sheet (52-1-A) restores these two positions. According to the proposed budget, three of the other five victim advocate positions will be supported by Justice Assistance Grant funding in 2011 and, if this grant is renewed in 2012, also in 2012. The proposed abrogation of the two positions and the placement of three positions on uncertain grant funding reflected the Department's interpretation of the priority of this function in light of the Department's mission and the City's current fiscal situation.

The Council appreciates the clarity of the Department's functional priorities and the general consistency of its budget proposals with those stated priorities. By this statement of legislative intent the Council requests the Department to give victim advocacy substantially higher priority than it does currently. The Council expects victim advocacy to be maintained even without grant funding, and expects that future budget proposals will not propose reducing victim advocacy unless the City's fiscal situation becomes substantially more dire than today.

Responsible Council Committee(s): Public Safety and Education

Date Due to Council: June 30, 2011